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Washington, D.C. 20505

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

30 August 1983

ZIMBABWE: PRIME MINISTER MUGABE'S VISIT [REDACTED]

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Summary

We believe Zimbabwean Prime Minister Mugabe hopes to use his visit to the US in mid-September to mend fences. Relations between Harare and Washington have been strained recently, more so than at the time of Mugabe's first visit to Washington four months after Zimbabwe gained independence in April 1980. Mugabe is not likely to seek additional US economic aid, but he will be anxious to reassure US officials and businessmen that Zimbabwe is eager to receive foreign investment. Mugabe also may want to discuss US military equipment sales to Zimbabwe. The Prime Minister can be expected candidly to express his concerns about Washington's policy of constructive engagement with South Africa and the slow pace of the Namibia negotiations. [REDACTED]

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Mugabe also will not hesitate to express his resentment about the negative treatment that he believes Zimbabwe receives in the Western press. The Prime Minister is visiting the US at a time when his attention is focused on internal problems:

This memorandum was written by [REDACTED] South Africa Branch, Africa Division, Office of African and Latin American Analysis. It has been coordinated with the Directorate of Operations. Questions and comments are welcome and should be directed to the Chief, Africa Division, ALA [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

inter-party and tribal strife, the tense security situation in the southwest portion of the country, and domestic economic problems. Mugabe probably hopes to parlay favorable publicity about the trip into a timely boost for his standing at home, particularly in view of the recent return from exile of his political rival, Joshua Nkomo. Mugabe's desire to reaffirm his position as a nonaligned African leader is underscored by his recent trip to Eastern Europe and his plan to make his first visit to the Soviet Union in October. [REDACTED]

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Status of Relations

Relations with Washington are friendly, but there are underlying frictions that flare up periodically. In particular, Mugabe's shift to a more hardline approach in dealing with internal problems over the past year has strained relations with the US and other Western countries. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] We believe Mugabe will be anxious to use this visit as an opportunity to mend fences and to reassure US officials of his desire for good relations. [REDACTED]

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Mugabe's first visit to the US was in August 1980, shortly after his party, the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU), won a decisive victory in the elections mandated by the Lancaster House Agreement that ended the Rhodesian civil war. Mugabe was impressed by the enthusiastic reception he received in Washington, according to Embassy reporting, and the visit was an important step in establishing good bilateral relations. Vice President Bush was warmly received in Harare last November. [REDACTED]

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Issues of Bilateral Tension

Economic issues underlie Mugabe's desire for good relations with Washington and the West in general. He recognizes that US development aid and investment are vital to Zimbabwe's economic success, and he has publicly expressed his appreciation for US support. Nonetheless, Mugabe is extremely sensitive to any actions by Washington that he believes infringe on Zimbabwe's sovereignty or to any suggestion from US officials that US aid is conditional. In addition, his efforts at pursuing a nonaligned foreign policy often take the form of anti-Western rhetoric and a tendency to adopt "progressive" positions in international forums that are contrary to US policy interests. The US Ambassador in Harare has expended considerable effort explaining to Zimbabwean officials why

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Harare's opposition to the US position on Nicaragua in the UN Security Council and its actions and statements in international forums in general necessarily affect bilateral relations. Foreign Ministry officials, however, continue to react defensively in such discussions, viewing them as undue US pressure. []

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Relations have also been strained in recent months by Mugabe's public and private expressions of resentment over Western criticism of his handling of internal security problems.

- Excesses by government troops in the government's campaign to halt dissident violence in Matabeleland may have resulted in as many as 2,000 deaths earlier this year.
- Harassment of opposition party members continues.
- Several persons charged with security-related offenses have been detained again after they were acquitted by the courts.
- White Air Force officers tried for the alleged involvement in the July 1982 sabotage of Thornhill Air Force base claimed to have been tortured while under interrogation. []

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Mugabe is likely to reiterate in his discussions with US officials his belief that Western media treatment of events in Zimbabwe is exaggerated, presents a distorted view of the country, and follows a double standard--condemning Zimbabwe while ignoring offenses in South Africa that he views as much worse. Mugabe believes, according to the US Ambassador, that Western governments and their spokesmen have a responsibility to set the media record straight and to portray Zimbabwe in a more favorable light. []

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Mugabe, who received friendly media treatment during his first visit to the US, may face tougher questions from journalists this time as a result of his government's recent crackdown on the press. Zimbabwe played a leading role in the recent decision of Frontline State information ministers to ban foreign correspondents who are based in or report to bureaus in South Africa. Zimbabwe subsequently placed further restrictions on journalists that amount to censorship of reports on dissident activities or government countermeasures. []

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Southern African Issues

Southern African questions will also be high on Mugabe's agenda when he visits Washington. He will want to discuss overall US policy toward South Africa--which he views as closely tied to bilateral US-Zimbabwean relations--and is likely to argue that the US policy of constructive

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engagement with Pretoria is not evenhanded. Mugabe will press for greater efforts by Washington to restrain South Africa's activities in the region. [REDACTED]

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The bilateral relationship between South Africa and Zimbabwe is strained and a sensitive subject in Harare--one rarely discussed with US officials there because of the government's perception that Washington is too close to Pretoria, according to Embassy reporting. Nonetheless, Harare may also see benefits from "closer" US-South African relations. [REDACTED]

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Harare and Pretoria maintain regular contact through [REDACTED] their trade missions. However Mugabe's refusal to accede to South African demands for ministerial level meetings and frequent anti-South African statements by Zimbabwean officials remain major irritants to bilateral relations. [REDACTED]

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Zimbabwe's economic dependence on South Africa provides Pretoria with a powerful coercive weapon. Zimbabwe is dependent on the rail network that links it with South African ports because of the shortcomings and/or disruption of alternative rail routes through Mozambique, Angola, and Tanzania. South Africa is the largest single foreign investor in Zimbabwe, over 80 percent of Zimbabwe's foreign trade currently passes through South Africa, and South Africa is Zimbabwe's single most important trading partner, according to the US Embassy in Pretoria. [REDACTED]

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In addition, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] For example, Zimbabwe was plunged into a severe fuel crisis as a result of the December 1982 sabotage of oil storage tanks in Beira, Mozambique. South African-backed Mozambican insurgents--who we believe were aided by South Africans because of the sophisticated nature of the sabotage--claimed responsibility, saying the act was in response to Zimbabwe's decision to send troops into Mozambique to guard the oil pipeline--Zimbabwe's only alternative to supply routes in South African territory. [REDACTED]

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Since the South African-induced oil crisis in January, Pretoria apparently has refrained from meddling in Zimbabwean affairs. This restraint, in our view, reflects a perception by South Africa that events in Zimbabwe are already unfolding according to its earlier predictions--that is that blacks are incapable of governing a modern society without succumbing to tribal rivalries. Pretoria may also be convinced that Zimbabwe is holding to its policy of not allowing the African National Congress (ANC) or the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC)--the two anti-South African groups that have unofficial "offices" in Harare--to stage operations into South Africa from Zimbabwean territory. Any perception by South Africa that Zimbabwe has changed

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[redacted]

this policy, in our view, could lead Pretoria to return to a coercive approach toward Harare. In that event, Harare in turn would probably blame South Africa's willingness to take such aggressive action at least partly on closer US-South African ties. [redacted]

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Namibia and Other African Issues

Despite Zimbabwe's position as the most prosperous and centrally located of the Frontline States, Harare has contributed mainly rhetorical support to the Namibian negotiating process. Mugabe is likely to echo African criticism of US policy on the issue in his discussions in Washington. [redacted]

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[redacted]

Although Mugabe's statements on the Namibian issue have been more restrained recently, earlier this year he charged that the US was "blackmailing" Africa by linking a Namibian settlement with the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola. The Zimbabwean Foreign Minister--who is more outspoken than Mugabe on Namibia--has stated that one of the main obstacles to Namibian independence has been "irrelevant, moribund US diplomacy." Namibia was the only area of substantive disagreement in his meeting with Vice President Bush last November. [redacted]

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Harare has taken a neutral position in the UN Security Council debates on Chad. In a statement in August, Mugabe avoided any specific references to the role of the US, France, or Libya saying instead that intervention by "external forces" could only worsen the Chadian conflict, which he called an internal affair. A foreign ministry official told the US Embassy in Harare that the reference was meant to apply to Libya as well as to the US and France. [redacted]

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In general, Harare has avoided criticism of Libya, probably because it hopes to continue to receive assistance from Tripoli. Relations date back to Zimbabwe's preindependence struggle, when Qadhafi reportedly supplied aid to both Mugabe's guerrillas and the rival forces of Joshua Nkomo. Libya opened a "People's Bureau" in Harare in 1980, and has since provided modest amount of economic and military aid. The arrival of a Libyan economic delegation in Harare in August during the height of fighting in Chad was probably more a matter of poor timing on Harare's part than a signal of its support for Libya. The Libyan delegation was in Harare to sign a trade agreement negotiated by the two countries earlier this year. [redacted]

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Mugabe Between East and West

Another of Mugabe's objectives during his visit, in our view, will be to allay US concerns about Zimbabwe's relations with East European countries and about his scheduled trip to the Soviet Union in October. We expect Mugabe to maintain that he pursues a balanced foreign policy and that as a nonaligned leader he is striving for good relations with both East and West. On a more practical level, Mugabe wants to diversify Zimbabwe's sources of international assistance, although he is probably aware that Moscow and its allies have been unwilling and increasingly unable to supply economic aid to Africa in amounts that would significantly supplement US and other Western assistance. [REDACTED]

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Relations with the Soviet Union have been slow to develop, despite Mugabe's agreement to visit Moscow and the USSR's assiduous efforts to convince him that they no longer have ties to his guerrilla rival, Joshua Nkomo, and the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU). We believe that Mugabe will continue to move cautiously with the Soviets. Moscow and Harare established diplomatic relations in 1981, but Zimbabwe has not yet opened an Embassy in Moscow. Zimbabwe also has turned down Soviet requests to open a trade mission and, until very recently, had refused to allow the USSR--unlike the US and UK--to exceed personnel ceilings at its Embassy in Harare. [REDACTED]

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On the other hand, Zimbabwe signed a small arms agreement with Moscow last November and in March received the first delivery of what will be a series of arms shipments in 1983 and 1984. [REDACTED] Increased instability in Zimbabwe, caused either by dissident activity or South African meddling, could cause Harare to seek additional military equipment and training from Moscow. [REDACTED]

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Mugabe believes he can adapt and incorporate into his own plans some aspects of the economic and social programs pursued by Eastern European and "progressive" nonaligned states. Harare enjoys particularly close relations with Yugoslavia, Romania, Bulgaria, and North Korea and China, states that gave the greatest support to Mugabe's forces during the liberation struggle. Harare has expanded these ties, not only by signing trade, agricultural, and educational agreements but also in the field of security assistance. [REDACTED]

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Mugabe's trip to Eastern Europe in May took him on his first visits to Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and East Germany, with whom relations had been cool. Mugabe extracted no significant economic aid, but offers of security assistance are under consideration by Harare. [REDACTED]

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[redacted] the bilateral political links are such that some form of military relationship, although on a smaller scale, will continue, in the view of the US Embassy in Harare. [redacted]

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Despite Mugabe's ties with Communist states, military and economic relations with the West, particularly the United Kingdom, remain paramount. The British connection reflects London's historic legacy in the country and the Thatcher government's role in arranging the settlement that led to black majority rule. London shares US concerns about Mugabe's policies and human rights record over the past year, but recently advised Washington that it planned no cutbacks in its current level of development aid. [redacted]

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The United Kingdom and Harare reached an agreement in June--following lengthy discussions--on the future role and size of the British Military Assistance Training Team. Although BMATT's overall strength will be reduced from about 120 to 60 advisors, the agreement indicates Zimbabwe still values British military assistance, according to the US Embassy in Harare. [redacted]

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Zimbabwe also has decided after a long delay to purchase Hawker-Hunter aircraft from the UK to replace those destroyed in the Thornhill sabotage last year. The deal had been held up by Harare in part because of an ongoing debate within the government and military over whether to continue purchasing Western equipment or to look elsewhere for replacements. [redacted]

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US security assistance also may be on Mugabe's agenda, according to a ministry of defense official. The Prime Minister may follow up on recent discussions held between the Ministry of Defense and Embassy officers on Foreign Military Sales credits and Zimbabwean interest in acquiring F-20 and C-130 aircraft and sidewinder missiles. Renewed Zimbabwean interest in US aircraft appears to be a result of the influence of the [redacted]

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[redacted] There were, however, no military representatives included on the official delegation as of 26 August. [redacted]

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Political Problems at Home

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[redacted] Mugabe has been preoccupied with internal problems over the last 18 months, in particular the sometimes violent rivalries between the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU), the party of the country's Shona-speaking majority, and the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU), which mainly represents the Ndebele-speaking minority. Growing lawlessness and violence in Matabeleland followed ZAPU leader Joshua Nkomo's expulsion from the cabinet in early 1982, which ruptured a tenuous ZANU/ZAPU political coalition. The unrest provoked harsh government reprisals that have left many Ndebele alienated from Mugabe's Shona-dominated government. [redacted]

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The government's campaign to stamp out political violence and to weaken ZAPU as a political force led Nkomo to flee from the country in March, claiming Mugabe had ordered his death. After five months of self-imposed exile in London, Nkomo returned to Zimbabwe in mid-August. Nkomo's public statements [redacted] indicate that he hopes to convince Mugabe that only he can lead the Ndebele into accepting a political reconciliation and end the violence. [redacted]

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Mugabe, for his part, does not appear eager to strike a deal with ZAPU. Nkomo's absence left ZAPU in disarray, and ZANU leaders hoped that the longer he stayed out of the country, the more irrelevant he would become to Zimbabwean politics. ZANU has been going through the motions of unity talks with ZAPU representatives, but [redacted] Mugabe has refused to make compromises. We believe Mugabe plans instead to win over gradually the remaining ZAPU leaders and to achieve a de facto one-party state when elections are held in 1985. Mugabe probably will tolerate Nkomo's role as spokesman for the Ndebele people, but will not hesitate to clamp down on Nkomo if his political activities interfere with Mugabe's longstated goal of a one party (ZANU) state. [redacted]

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Low-level banditry and dissident activity continue to disrupt the southwestern provinces of the country. Although we believe it does not pose a direct threat to Mugabe's regime, efforts to maintain security have diverted scarce government resources. In addition, the unrest has undermined the confidence of the economically important white commercial farmers in the region. Whites are a highly visible target: 16 whites have been killed on farms so far this year. Officials of the Commercial Farmers's Union are once again putting pressure on the government to improve the security situation in Matabeleland.* [redacted]

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* See Annex B for a discussion of white attitudes toward black government. [redacted]

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Mugabe's Economic Concerns

In his discussions in Washington, Mugabe is likely to express appreciation for US aid, which the Embassy in Harare reports has been used effectively. US economic assistance to Zimbabwe is the largest US aid program in Africa. We believe that Mugabe recognizes that any substantial increase in US aid is unlikely, and that he will be seeking general assurances of continued US support. []

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Mugabe may raise, however, his government's recent appeal for further emergency aid to alleviate food shortages caused by the continuing drought. Over 2 million people are already fully dependent on the government's food supply program, and the number is expected to increase until the harvest in April 1984. Crop failures have also caused Zimbabwe to lose revenues from agricultural exports. []

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Zimbabwe is experiencing its worst economic problems since independence. The drought, a decline in mineral earnings due to worldwide recession, and a dearth of new foreign investment combined to check the brisk economic recovery that followed the end of the civil war. Real growth rates of roughly 12 percent each in 1980 and 1981 plunged to about 2 percent in 1982, and the economy has continued to stagnate this year. []

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We expect a moderate economic upturn next year. The world economic recovery should begin to stimulate mining exports while agreements with the IMF--some requiring politically risky measures such as a currency devaluation--will ease balance-of-payments constraints. If rains return to normal, we estimate that improved harvests and increased mining and manufacturing production could push economic growth up to about 3 percent in 1984. []

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While Mugabe may point out that the world recession and drought are factors beyond Zimbabwe's control, the government's commitment to a socialist path of development has impeded the growth of the private sector--currently the backbone of the economy--and of new foreign investment, although he acknowledges the crucial role of the private sector. Mugabe's personal anti-capitalist bias has a strong puritanical flavor. He regards capitalism's emphasis on individualism as basically selfish and immoral and believes that natural resources belong to all the people, not private interests. []

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Foreign investor confidence has been eroded by Mugabe's steadfast refusal to enter into bilateral investment guarantee agreements--such as an Overseas Private Insurance Corporation (OPIC) agreement with the US. Although investment guidelines issued late last year spelled out the ground rules for foreign investment, the government stopped short of introducing any significant new incentives to attract it. In addition, public statements by government

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spokesmen, including the Prime Minister, that reiterate the country's socialist goals continue to frighten off foreign investors. [REDACTED]

Despite Mugabe's personal commitment to socialism, however, he has pursued pragmatic economic policies, relying heavily on Cabinet leader Bernard Chidzero as the architect of these measures. As a result, in his discussions in Washington, the Prime Minister is likely to express regrets about the low level of private US investment in Zimbabwe. [REDACTED]

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He is also likely to point to the slow pace of social reform the government has pursued--despite political pressures for change--in order to avoid the severe economic dislocations that might result from turning too quickly to socialism. The gradual program of land resettlement, long considered the principal objective of the struggle for black rule, and the austere budget proposals for 1983-84 now being debated--which include tax increases and cuts in food subsidies--exemplify Harare's deliberate policies. [REDACTED]

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We believe that so long as Mugabe is in power, Zimbabwe will continue to tolerate a mixed economy but that his political commitment to improve the living conditions of blacks and to expand government control over mining, manufacturing, and farming will retard economic growth even after drought conditions ease and demand for minerals picks up. [REDACTED]

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ANNEX B

Ambivalent White Attitudes Toward Black Government

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In our judgment, the Mugabe government's pragmatic economic policies have contributed to a decline in the fear and anxiety with which the white population in Zimbabwe greeted Mugabe's coming to power three years ago. This change in white attitudes has been an influence for stability in Zimbabwe. Although whites comprise less than 2 percent of the population, they still retain most of the key positions in business and agriculture and some top jobs in the bureaucracy. []

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Whites, nevertheless, remain uneasy about some trends they see or anticipate, including:

- Rhetoric by some ministers--occasionally including Mugabe--to increase greatly the pace at which the economy moves toward socialism.
- Calls by Mugabe and his party for a one-party state, which might lead to the abrogation of the constitutional provision reserving, until at least 1987, 20 seats for whites in the 100-seat House of Assembly.
- Calls by government ministers for the repeal of dual citizenship (most whites hold citizenship rights in the United Kingdom or South Africa, as well as Zimbabwe) and for the abolition of the Senate, where constitutionally 10 of the 40 appointed seats are reserved for whites.
- Perceived degradation of the quality of education, health care, and government services as these have been extended to the black majority.
- Whites are also concerned that the government is abusing the emergency powers that it inherited from the regimes of Ian Smith and Abel Muzorewa. []

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As a result, the white community--which was 240,000 strong at independence--has shrunk to roughly 140,000 and a fairly steady rate of white emigration continues. []

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